

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 EB-07 OMB-01 AGR-01
TRSE-00 /100 W
-----171559Z 114837 /43

R 171333Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9357
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ANTANANARIVO 1137

BRUSSELS FOR USEC

E.O. 11652:GDS
TAGS: PFOR, CN, US
SUBJECT: SITUATION IN COMORO ISLANDS

REFS: (A) PORT LOUIS 0629, (B) PORT LOUIS 0642, (C) BRUSSELS 6065,
(D) STATE 131571, (E) ANTANANARIVO 1094 AND PREVIOUS

1. SUMMARY. ROVING COMORIAN AMBASSADOR TO THE OCCIDENT
YVES LE BRET TOLD ME ON JUNE 16 THAT CONTRARY TO REPORTS
CIRCULATING OUTSIDE, THE SITUATION IN THE COMOROS IS CALM.
HE SAID THAT REPORTS TO THE CONTRARY ARE DELIVERATELY BEING
CIRCULATED BY ENEMIES OF PRESENT REGIME. WHILE FOOD SITUATION
WAS CAUSING SOME CONCERN, HE THOUGHT SOME COMORIAN NEEDS COULD
BE MET THROUGH INCREASED COOPERATION WITH OTHER INDIAN
OCEAN COUNTRIES. END SUMMARY.

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2. LE BRET SAID THAT REPORTS OF DISSENSION IN THE COMOROS
WERE COMING FROM THREE SOURCES. THE REUTERS STRINGER IN
ANTANANARIVO WAS WRITING STORIES BASED ON RADIO COMOROS'
DOMESTIC BROADCASTS, INTERPRETED FOR HIM BY A LOCAL
COMORIAN. UNFORTUNATELY, THIS INTERPRETER WAS AGAINST THE REGIME
OF ALI SOILIH AND, THEREFORE, FALSIFIED THE BROADCASTS OR GAVE

THEM THE WORST POSSIBLE INTERPRETATION. LE BRET HAD CALLED ON THE REUTERS CORRESPONDENT AND TOLD HIM TO START LISTENING TO RADIO COMOROS' INTERNATIONAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE BROADCASTS AND NOT TO RELY UPON LOCAL INTERPRETER. LE BRET ALSO SAID THAT FOLLOWERS OF FORMER CHIEF OF STATE AHMED ABDALLAH WERE ALSO SPREADING UNFAVORABLE STORIES AMONG THE ARAB COUNTRIES ABOUT THE PRESENT REGIME, PARTICULARLY THE ACCUSATION THAT IT WAS ANTI-RELIGIOUS. HE ALSO SAID THERE WAS A WRITER ON "LE MONDE" IN PARIS WHO WAS NOT HELPING THINGS. ALTHOUGH HE COULD EXPLAIN THE BASIS FOR SOME OF THE STORIES GOING AROUND, HE WAS AT A LOSS TO UNDERSTAND THE REPORTS ON MILITARY DESERTIONS, AS THERE HAD BEEN NONE TO HIS KNOWLEDGE.

3. LE BRET SAID THAT COMORIAN RELATIONS WITH SAUDI ARABIA WERE VERY GOOD, ALTHOUGH NOTHING HAD BEEN FORMALIZED, AND THAT HE HAD BEEN RECEIVED TWICE BY KING SAUD WHO EACH TIME HAD GIVEN HIM A CHECK FOR A MILLION DOLLARS AS A PERSONAL GIFT TO THE NEW STATE. HE HAD JUST FINISHED ESTABLISHING RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES WHERE HE HAD HAD TO STRAIGHTEN OUT THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES CONCERNING THE LACK OF STATUS OF PRETENDED REPRESENTATIVES OF AHMED ABDULLAH.

4. COMORIAN RELATIONS WITH LIBYA WERE STILL STRAINED, HE SAID. LIBYA HAD STARTED OFF BADLY WITH THE NEW STATE BY OFFERING A MILLION DOLLARS IN AID TO BE USED SOLELY FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF MOSQUES. THIS HAD BEEN REFUSED ON THE BASIS THAT THE COMOROS HAD SUFFICIENT MOSQUES ALREADY. A LIBYAN AMBASSADOR WHO ARRIVED UNANNOUNCED SHORTLY THEREAFTER WAS NOT RECEIVED. THE LIBYANS THEN OFFERED THE MILLION

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DOLLARS AGAIN TO BE USED FOR THE MAJUNGA REFUGEES, AND THIS WAS ACCEPTED. LE BRET NOW PREFERS TO DEAL WITH THE LIBYAN GOVERNMENT THROUGH THE ISLAMIC LEAGUE REPRESENTATIVE IN MAURITIUS, BECAUSE HE DOES NOT TRUST THE LIBYAN CHARGE IN ANTANANARIVO WHO HE BELIEVES IS HOSTILE TO THE REGIME OF ALI SOILIH. (COMMENT: HE IS CORRECT IN THIS. THE LIBYAN CHARGE, WHO HAS CONTINUOUS CONTACT WITH NORTH AFRICAN TEACHERS IN THE COMOROS, CRITICIZES THE REGIME FOR ITS LOOSENING OF OLD ISLAMIC TRADITIONS, FOR ITS EXCESSIVE SPENDING ON POLITICAL INDOCTRINATION, INCLUDING THE BUILDING OF MANY REVOLUTIONARY YOUTH CENTERS, AND FOR NOT YET HAVING TOUCHED THE MILLION DOLLARS IN LIBYAN AID. END COMMENT.)

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AGR-01 /100 W

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ANTANANARIVO 1137

5. THE FOOD SITUATION IS CAUSING SOME CONCERN TO THE COMORIAN GOVERNMENT, AS SUPPLIERS ARE NOW DEMANDING CASH IN ADVANCE. FOOD WHICH WAS COUNTED ON TO COME FROM THE NETHERLANDS AND THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY HAS NOT ARRIVED ON SCHEDULE DUE TO "SHIPPING DIFFICULTIES." THE COMORIAN GOVERNMENT THEREFORE HAD PURCHASED SOME RICE IN MAURITIUS, AND ALSO SOME SUGAR AFTER THE MALAGASY GOVERNMENT HAD TRIED TO OVERCHARGE FOR THE SAME COMMODITY. LE BRET HOPED THAT TRADE WITH OTHER INDIAN OCEAN COUNTRIES COULD PLAY INCREASING IMPORTANCE IN THE COMORIAN FOOD SUPPLY. HIS RECENT TRIPS TO MAURITIUS AND THE SEYCHELLES HAVE LAID THE BASIS FOR THIS. (COMMENT: AN AFP REPORT IN THE LOCAL PRESS BULLETIN DESCRIBES THE SIGNATURE OF A COMOROS/ SEYCHELLES AGREEMENT ON ECONOMIC COOPERATION WITH EMPHASIS TN THE FOLLOWING FIELDS: MARITIME AND AERIAL TRANSPORT; TOURISM; FISHING; COCONUT INDUSTRY; AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS. END COMMENT.)

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6. LE BRET ALSO SAID THAT THERE WAS NO QUESTIN OF DIVISION AMONG THE ISLANDS. THE COMORIAN GOVERNMENT WAS TRYING TO DE-EMPHASIZE INSULAR ALLEGIANCES BY DIVIDING EACH ISLAND INTO SEVERAL REGIONS, EACH OF WHICH WOULD BE DIRECTLY ANSWERABLE TO THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. (COMMENT: THIS IS

ONE INSTANCE WHERE LE BRET MAY BE COVERING UP. UNDP REPS
IN ANTANANARIVO HAD LEARNED THAT SOME OF THE LOCAL ANJOUAN
OFFICIALS HAD RECENTLY BEEN REPLACED BY MEN FROM GRAND
COMORO AND IN ONE CASE BY A SENEGALESE MILITARY OFFICER WHO
WAS HELPING TO TRAIN THE COMORIAN ARMED FORCES. END COMMENT.)

7. ON THE RELIGIOUS ISSUE, LE BRET SAID THAT NEW
CONSTITUTION GAVE AN IMPORTANT PLACE TO THE ISLAMIC RELIGION
AND THAT THE NEW STAFFING PATTERN OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM
PROVIDES FOR A NUMBER OF KORANIC TEACHERS.

7. COMMENT: LE BRET IS UNDOUBTEDLY TRYING TO PUT THE
BEST FACE ON THINGS, BUT I AM MORE INCLINED TO BELIEVE
HIM THAN SOME OF THE OTHER REPORTS CIRCULATING. THIS DOES
NOT MEAN THAT ALL IS SERENE IN THE COMOROS. IN ADDITION
TO ANJOUAN REPORTS SITED ABOVE, WE HAVE LEARNED FROM THE
LOCAL UNDP REP THAT ALI SOILIH REFUSED TO RECEIVE A RECENT
UN DELEGATION BECAUSE THE CHIEF DELEGATE HAD BEEN REPLACED
AT THE LAST MINUTE WITHOUT NOTIFYING THE COMORIAN GOVERNMENT.
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Message Attributes

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